



Satellite image with enhanced low cloud-top temperatures (degrees C) for 7:15 a.m. EST (NOAA)

Agricultural Weather Highlights - Friday - January 31, 2003

- ***In the West***, beneficial precipitation is confined to areas from the ***Pacific Northwest to the northern Rockies***. The remainder of the ***West*** continues to experience a variety of problems related to long-term precipitation deficits, including low reservoir levels and drought-damaged rangelands. In the ***Southwest***, record warmth is prematurely melting some of the high-elevation snow pack.
- ***On the Plains***, persistent warmth across the ***southern half of the region*** is causing wheat to lose some of its winter hardiness. Today's high temperatures are forecast to range from near 60 degrees F on the ***central High Plains*** to 70 degrees F in ***West Texas***. On the ***northern Plains***, mild weather has eroded most of winter wheat's protective snow, leaving the crop exposed to potential cold outbreaks.
- ***In the Corn Belt***, beneficial rain and snow showers are moistening previously dry topsoils. Much of the ***Midwest*** has been in a developing drought situation for several months, with the most significant dryness noted in areas from ***northwestern Missouri to Lower Michigan***.
- ***In the South***, fieldwork accelerated during a mostly dry January, following extensive delays due to excessive wetness during the last quarter of 2002.

Outlook: Rain and snow will accompany a cold front today across the ***Midwest***. By Saturday, the wintry mix will reach the ***Northeast***. Meanwhile, periods of rain and snow will continue across the ***Pacific Northwest***. Very warm, dry weather will prevail across the ***central and southern Plains*** and ***Southwest*** through week's end, but a developing winter storm may provide much-needed rain and snow to the ***central Plains*** by early next week. The NWS 6-10 day outlook for February 5-9 calls for drier-than-normal weather in the ***Far West*** and the ***lower Great Lakes region***, while above-normal precipitation is forecast for the ***central and southern Rockies, Plains, and South***. Below-normal temperatures are expected across most of the U.S., with near-normal temperatures confined to the ***northern Plains, Pacific Northwest, and southern Florida***.

Contact: Brad Rippey, Agricultural Meteorologist, USDA/OCE/WAOB, Washington, D.C. (202-720-2397)